



Tupelo Times

FEBRUARY & MARCH 2010 VOL. 6, NO. 1

The Newsletter of the **Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center**

Nuts Over Natives

I might surprise you with my passion for native plants. Why? I'm a diehard bow hunter who loves to sit outside all day waiting for that unsuspecting buck. I use a chainsaw, table saw, gas weed eater and plenty of tools that make lots of noise. I like to build things and go fishing. So when I tell folks that I like wildflowers, they seem a bit startled. The truth of the matter is there's no stereotype associated with being interested in native plants; you just need to be someone who loves nature.

I first learned about native plants in college in a wildlife management course where I discovered the best way to manage wild game is to manage plants. It turns out there are lots of native plants that are good for wild things. I grew up thinking that food plots were the thing for wildlife. Boy, did I have a lot to learn.

Deer eat a little bit of everything. To meet their dietary needs you're better off with a variety of plants. Recently, I watched a doe and her yearling browse through my prairie planting and noticed that every plant was subject to scrutiny. Rabbits and squirrels depend on a variety of native plants too. In fact, so do many birds and small mammals. Each plant can have varying amounts of nutrients that a growing animal can use. Leaves, twigs, fruit and flowers all contribute to healthy wildlife populations.

Later in my career, I realized I should be interested in insects. Insects feed a lot of wildlife too. Turkeys and quail require insects as adults but especially as poults. How do you make sure you have the right bugs on the menu? Native plants. Some insects are real picky on what plants they

will eat on or pollinate. So a variety of native plants makes for a variety of bugs.

After studying and working with native plants for nearly 13 years I've discovered the most important reason to use native plants is not their beauty, their resistance to pests or resilience in Missouri's climate. It's not even their value to wildlife species (even though that is high). Their highest value is in their existence. Every native species in Missouri's ecosystem has a value whether I can see it or not. And that is enough for me. I have learned enough to know that I can't know it all.

Aldo Leopold is considered by many the father of modern wildlife biology. He said in his book *A Sand County Almanac*, "To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering." I like to build things, I like to see wildlife. Who am I to say that any part is not necessary? Native plants help me build a healthy ecology on my property. Native plants help build strong wildlife populations. I enjoy the fruits of that labor as I watch a hen turkey nip bugs from tall grass, or as I eat a well earned venison meal. But I also enjoy warblers migrating through my woods foraging for insects, and evening sunsets that make the colors in a prairie planting pop.

I have no hesitation telling folks I enjoy native plants. I know them, I grow them; and it doesn't interfere one bit with my other interests. As I see it, my love for native plants fits perfectly and I wouldn't have it any other way.

By A. J. Hendershott,
Outreach & Education Regional Supervisor

The Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center will close on Sundays beginning January 3, 2010. The nature center building will remain open Tuesday-Saturday 8-5, with the grounds and trails open seven days a week. Closure on Sunday is an effort by the Missouri Department of Conservation to minimize costs and to operate within the department's financial means.

NATIVE PLANT SEMINAR

Saturday, March 13
8:30am-3:00pm

The Missouri Department of Conservation and the Cape Girardeau County Master Gardeners are partnering for the third year to bring you the native plant seminar. Using native plants in your landscape benefits wildlife and is a great alternative to the traditional manicured lawn. Dave Tylka, author of *Native Landscaping for Wildlife and People*, will be one of the featured guest speakers for the day. Call to receive a flier listing the event activities. Ages 15 and up. **Seminar registration begins February 2.** There is no registration fee.

Native Plant Sale

Purchasing native plants in southeast Missouri is not always easy. If you want to get started, Missouri suppliers will be on hand during the seminar so you can purchase native seeds and plants for your yard. Stop by these exhibits anytime during the day. Visit www.grownative.org to learn more about native species and suppliers.

Making a Difference for the Birds

Often times, energized people who volunteer at the nature center take great ideas and run with them, but after a Migratory Bird Day event, one idea soared to a whole new level. Recognizing the interest and need for a birding group, these volunteers began what is now called the "Swamp Candle Birders of Southeast Missouri".

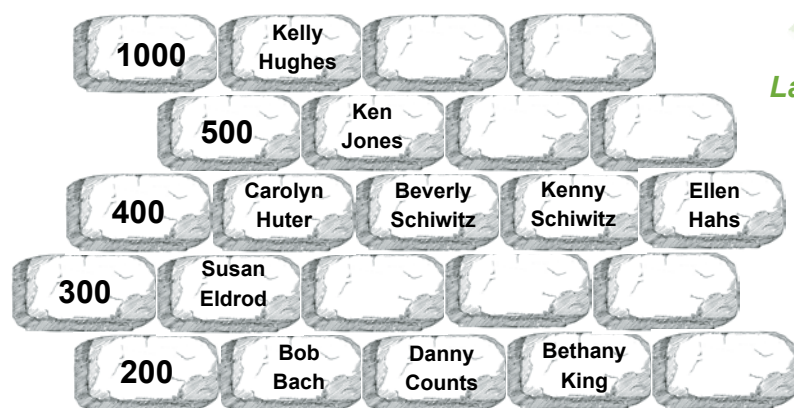
The birding group meets monthly at the nature center, leads birding trips in the region, shares information and new sightings via a newsletter, and assists the nature center with several bird-related programs and events. For more information, write to sebirding@yahoo.com. What a wonderful example of how nature center volunteers are extending conservation activities and making a lasting difference.



Swamp Candle Birders
Southeast Missouri

Volunteer Milestones

Hours of Service



Paving the Way

Those purchasing paving stones for the Conservation Nature Center walkway:

*Holly Lintner in memory of Bruce E. Yeager
John & Janet Parson in memory of Bernie Breer
LaWanda Rhodes in memory of Jim & Betty Boyer*

Thank You

**Donations of
Time, Material, and Service**

*Natural objects: Ty Ludlow, Arthur Schiwitz,
Jane & Stan Grimm, Alice Graefe
Monetary: Ron Leach
Book: Sandra Francis*

Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center is located in North Cape Girardeau County Park off Kingshighway just east of Interstate 55 at exit 99. The building is open Tuesday through Saturday 8am to 5pm and is closed Sundays and Mondays, New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The area is open daily from sunrise to 10pm in accordance with the Cape Girardeau County Park Rules and Regulations.

Nature center grounds and trails are closed to pets, horses, hunting, collecting, littering, fires, and alcoholic beverages. The trails are also closed to bicycles, jogging, in-line skates, skateboards, scooters, and motorized vehicles.

The Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center is operated through hunting and fishing license revenues and through the 1/8% "Design for Conservation" sales tax. There is no admission charge.

Phone: 573/290-5218; Fax: 573/290-5566; Internet: www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/cnc/cape

Discover Nature Schools Program

Are you looking for an exciting way to get students involved with the natural world? Check out the Discover Nature Schools Program. Currently, we have the Nature Unleashed Unit for 3rd to 4th grades and the Aquatic Ecosystems Unit for middle schools. This is a premium quality education product created by ecology professionals. It has been field tested in Missouri schools and features information that pertains to Missouri's native ecosystems. This product satisfies Grade Level Expectations and can help prepare your students for the MAP test.

There are many positive aspects to becoming a Discover Nature School: full color student guides that include vocabulary and questions for each chapter; a comprehensive teacher's guide that includes hands-on activities, lesson plans, background information, assessments, and more; grants to cover a field experience and required equipment. For more information about the Discover Nature Schools Program call Bridget Jackson at 573-290-5218.

Educators' Niche

Featured Item: Born to be Wild poster

Missouri is home to more than 2,350 native plants and more than 20,000 native animals. Hundreds of these are species of conservation concern in Missouri. This means they are rare or that their survival is endangered. This poster features some of these plants and animals and tells about their habitat needs. Come visit us at the Nature Center and pick up your copy today.

LEARN MORE, DO MORE, ENJOY MORE

If inexperience is keeping you from enjoying Missouri's great outdoors, then perhaps a Discover Nature-Women program is for you. These ladies participated in our Discover Nature-Women canoe trip on the St. Francis River where they learned



some basics of canoeing and had the opportunity to put those skills to use while having fun with other women. Discover Nature-Women programs are designed to help women build skills and confidence so that they can pursue a wide range of outdoor activities alone, with friends or with their families. Regional Discover Nature-Women events occur throughout the year, allowing you to participate in a Discover Nature-Women workshop almost any time. Watch the Tupelo Times for upcoming events in our area or



check out events throughout the state on our website at the following link: <http://www.mdc.mo.gov/programs/mow/>.

The Nature Shop

FEBRUARY

Fiddles and Forests

Hear the story of the Scots/Irish settlers of the past. This collection shares their struggles and determination as they settled the wilderness of Missouri's Ozark country. Living was hard: but these hardy folk carved out a life and a character of their own. In a large part, it was music that saw them through difficult times. This is their story in words and song.



**Discounted price:
\$7.20 plus tax**

20% Off

*Special monthly discounts ...
(Conservation Heritage Card
discounts do not apply)*

*The Nature Shop
features a variety of nature-
related books, videos/DVDs,
and resources to increase
awareness and knowledge
of conservation and the
outdoors.*

MARCH

Missouri Wildflowers

This revised, sixth edition has a new look. Dennison's classic now has larger pages, type and pictures for improved readability. Colored tabs have been added for easier location of flower color groups.

The taxonomy has been updated in accordance with the most current naming conventions.

**Discounted price:
\$9.60 plus tax**





February Events

Please call the nature center at **573/290-5218** on or after **February 2** for this month's programs requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call to cancel so that someone on the waiting list may attend.

snappers

**Nature Journaling
on White Oak Trace**
Saturday, February 6
10-11:30am



Would you like to preserve your outdoor memories and observations? Nature journaling allows you to do just that in a creative way. Join us to make your own nature journal and learn some basic journaling techniques. No artistic skills are needed. **Snappers** programs are designed for kids ages 7-11. Registration required.

Early registration begins January 15

12/13 Hunter Education
Friday-5:30-9:30pm
Saturday 8am-4pm

This 10-hour hunter education certification course is required for anyone born January 1, 1967, or after, who wants to hunt with a firearm in Missouri. The class is open to ages 11 and up; youth 12 and under must have an adult accompany them. This course begins on Friday evening and continues on Saturday from 8 am until 4 pm. You must attend both sessions and pass a test to receive certification. All students 15 and under must bring proof of age. Bring any previously purchased permits with you to class. Pre-registration required. Call 573-290-5730 to register.

**13 The Great Backyard
Bird Count**
Saturday, 1-2pm, 3-4pm

How many birds are present this winter and how far south did they fly? What are the long-term trends in their populations? The only way these questions can be answered is with your help. Every President's Day weekend all across North America short counts are conducted by citizen scientists (like yourself) and the data entered on the Internet. Counts can be made from the backyard, during a stroll through the woods or from a nearby park. You may join the group at the nature center from 1-2 pm or 3-4 pm or you may wish to participate on your own. For more details on participating on your own visit www.birdsource.org for details. Binoculars, field guides and assistance with identification are provided during the nature center counts. **Ages 8 and up. No registration required.**

Did you know... A groundhog is also known as a whistle pig and a wood chuck?

Did you know... The opossum is Missouri's only marsupial?

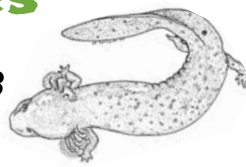


photo by Scott Kelley

This is the most widely distributed early spring flower and is found in nearly every habitat except extreme wet areas statewide. Look for small white or pink petals with pink veins. Native Americans ate the roots and the leaves are also edible.

Mudpuppies

Wildlife in Winter
Saturday, February 13
9am, 11am or 1pm
Tuesday, February 16
9am or 11am



What happens to all the wild animals in winter? Some hibernate, of course, but we'll learn some other special "tricks" animals use to help them survive these frigid months. **Mudpuppies** programs are designed for kids ages 3-6. Please limit attendance to one 45-minute program per month. Registration required.

16 Purple Martin Primer
Tuesday, 6-7pm

Native Americans and early settlers recognized the importance of Purple martins for pest control and as a seasonal calendar. To this day, people have enjoyed the company of martins and are fascinated by their antics. Attracted to human habitation, Purple martins rely on man-made structures for nesting and have become more dependent on us for their survival. Whether you're considering to provide housing for martins for the first time or if you've been a successful Purple martin landlord for years, you'll enjoy and benefit from this program. Perhaps you've tried attracting martins unsuccessfully and need a few pointers. Purple martin specialist Jerry Hampton will be on hand to answer your questions and provide insight into the minds of these fascinating flyers. **Ages 12 and up. No registration required.**

18 Habitat for Bluebirds
Thursday, 6:30-8pm

Discover the nature of bluebirds and what your family can do to attract them to your property. You'll learn what bluebirds look for when selecting habitat to raise a family and how your family can help them be successful. Each family will build a bluebird nest box to take home. Discover Nature Families are designed to help adults and children explore nature and master outdoor skills together. **Ages 8 and up. Registration required**



20 Meet the Artist
Saturday, 1-3pm

La Wanda (Francis) Rhodes is a registered nurse of 30 years. Her career has taken her to many of the back roads of her native Bollinger County. An artist at heart, she found the beauty of the seasons captivating as she journeyed along the road and hopes to share a few of her wildflower moments with all of you. Please bring your own wildflower pictures to share and discuss. **All ages. Youth and adult groups welcome. No registration required.**

Temporary Display

"Along the Road" is a wildflower journey into the countryside of Bollinger County with amateur photographer La Wanda Rhodes and an 8 megapixel digital camera. You will see the familiar; and discover the unusual. From Ox-eye daisies and Queen Anne's lace to the fanciful Green dragon, Elephant's foot and Monkey flower, Rhodes captures delightful wildflower images that are a must-see for you and your family before your next journey "along the road".

RACERS



Spring Journeys
Saturday, February 20
9am-2pm

Take a trip to Ten Mile Pond Conservation Area near East Prairie to find out more about the spring migration movement of waterfowl and shorebirds. Wildlife Management Biologist, Rob Vinson, will show you the importance of providing spring habitat, what species of birds to expect, what birds are looking for when they are visiting our wetland complexes, and why it is important to know about the life histories of these species for proper land management. Wear comfortable walking shoes and bring a sack lunch and water bottle. **Racers** programs are designed for teens ages 12-17. **Registration required.**

20 Conservation Trails
Hickory Canyons/Pickle Springs
Saturday, 8:30am-4:30pm



Hickory Canyons are the largest known sandstone canyons in Missouri. Though not as extensive as those in the Shawnee Forest in Illinois, the large canyon formed by Hickory Creek features a hollow surrounded by rugged bluffs, rock formations, ledges and shelters to explore. A waterfall forms the beginning of Establishment Creek, named for a 1790s settlement near the Mississippi River. This trail is rated "difficult" due to some steep climbs. We will complete two trail hikes totaling about 4 miles. **Ages 8 and up. Registration required.**

23 Nature Art
Nature Scrapbooking
Tuesday, 6-7:30pm



Do you want to preserve one of your favorite outdoor memories? Scrapbooking allows you to keep those memories alive. Bring three or four photographs of your outdoor adventure and any memorabilia to make a nature scrapbook page. **Ages 16 and up. Registration required.**

**27 Great River
Road Adventure**
Saturday, 9-3pm



The Great River Road, winding nearly 3,000 miles along the Mississippi River, provides travelers the opportunity to experience the cultural and natural resources of this beautiful landscape. Travel the Great River Road in southeast Missouri and explore a few of these unique sites. **Ages 18 and up. Registration required.**

Did you know... That white-tailed deer are crepuscular.

Did you know... That great horned owls begin nesting in February?

27 Discovery Station
Reptiles and Amphibians
Saturday, 1-4pm

Many amphibians and reptiles call southeast Missouri home. Come find out about these interesting creatures including what makes them special and how to recognize them. **All ages. Youth and adult groups welcome. No registration required.**



March Events

Please call the nature center at **573/290-5218** on or after **March 2** for this month's programs requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call to cancel so that someone on the waiting list may attend.

6 Discovery Station Don't Rescue Me Saturday, 1-4pm

We've all found a baby bird that's fallen from the nest or a young animal whose mother seems to have abandoned it. Our first instinct is to save this helpless creature. Come find out why all animals don't need to be rescued, how some mothers hide their young, and how all creatures are a part of the circle of life. All ages. Youth and adult groups welcome. No registration required.

6 Photography Saturday, 8am-Noon

Nature center volunteer, Charlie Wilson, will share his passion for photography and introduce you to the basics of nature photography. Bring your camera and get ready to learn how to capture the unique landscapes and cool critters that you may encounter in the Missouri outdoors. **Discover Nature Families** are designed to help adults and children explore nature and master outdoor skills together. Ages 8 and up. Registration required.

Early registration begins February 16

snappers



Snappers will not meet this month. Instead, bring your entire family to "Froggy Friday" on Friday, March 26.

9-11 Hunter Education Tuesday-Thursday 5:30-9pm each night

This 10-hour hunter education certification course is required for anyone born January 1, 1967, or after, who wants to hunt with a firearm in Missouri. The class is open to ages 11 and up; youth 12 and under must have an adult accompany them. You must attend all sessions and pass a test to receive certification. All students 15 and under must bring proof of age. Bring any previously purchased permits with you to class. Pre-registration required. Call 573-290-5730 to register.



The swamp rabbit is similar to the cottontail but is distinguished by its generally larger size and small round ears. Another difference between swamper and cottontails is the swamp rabbits amazing ability to swim. When threatened, swamp rabbits will enter the water, swimming and diving to escape harm.

In Missouri, the swamp rabbit can only be found near wetlands in the Southeast portion of the state. Due to wetland and swamp habitat loss, the numbers of swamp rabbits have significantly declined in the last several years. Continued efforts to return parts of southeast Missouri to their original wetland state has helped increase this animal's survival.

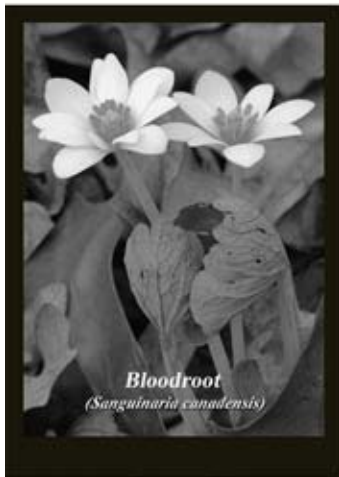


photo by Scott Kelley

This unique little flower blooms on rich wooded slopes and valleys lasting only one day. Its petals are uneven and sometimes take the appearance of a square when viewed from the top. Sanguinaria, Latin, sanguis, "blood." Native Americans used the sienna-red juice of the roots for a dye, thus "bloodroot."

13 Native Plant Seminar Saturday, 8:30am-3pm

The Missouri Department of Conservation and the Cape Girardeau County Master Gardeners host the fourth annual native plant seminar. Using native grasses, wildflowers, trees and shrubs adds variety and color to your landscape, attracts wildlife and reduces the cost of energy-consuming lawns. To learn more, call to receive a flier listing the event activities and guest speakers. Registration is free and begins February 2.

18 Nature Art Seed Packets Thursday, 6-7:30pm

Planting native species in your garden can be beneficial for wildlife. Seeds from the garden also make a wonderful gift. Come learn about the native wildflowers at the nature center and craft a seed packet to give a natural gift to a friend which in turn will benefit wildlife. Ages 16 and up. Registration required.

Mudpuppies

Busy Beavers Saturday, March 20 9am, 11am or 1pm Tuesday, March 23 9am or 11am

Chomp! Chomp! Splash! Splash! What's that sound? It's a busy beaver! Join us to find out about these special animals that call Missouri home. **Mudpuppies** programs are designed for kids ages 3-6. Please limit attendance to one 45-minute program per month. Registration required.



20 Hunting Spring Gobblers Saturday, 1-3pm

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the modern turkey hunting season in Missouri. In those fifty years Missourians have seen an increase in wild turkey populations throughout the state. This program will discuss what role MDC has played in efforts to repopulate this majestic bird, the importance of MDC and NWTF (National Wildlife Turkey Federation) and the impact they have had on the future of the wild turkey. Methods used to successfully harvest your first spring bird will also be included. Discover Hunting programs are designed to help youth and adults experience the rich traditions of hunting through shooting skills classes and hunting clinics. Ages 12 and up. Registration required.



23 Wetlands and Waterfowl Saturday, 9am-3pm

Many ducks and geese overwinter at southeast Missouri wetlands and are a joy to watch. Join the "Swamp Candle Birders" birding group as they venture out to some of the region's wetlands managed for waterfowl. Learn how to identify many of these species on the water as well as in the sky. Spotting scopes and binoculars will be available to increase viewing. Ages 8 and up. Registration required.

Temporary Display

View the nature center's gallery in March to view "The Call of Nature", a photography exhibit by Sharon Tuschhoff.

26 Froggy Friday Friday, 6:30-9pm

Did you hear that? There it is again! It's a spring peeper or a chorus frog. These are the first frogs we hear in the spring. Learn which frogs are waking up from their long winter's nap. Find out how they change from tadpoles to frogs as we uncover the mysteries of these fantastic amphibians. Join us for a short hike outside to listen for frog calls and come inside for some "froggerific" activities. Dress for the weather and bring your flashlight. All ages. Youth and adult groups welcome. No registration required.



27 Conservation Trails Garden of the Gods (Illinois) Saturday, 8:30am-4:30pm

The rock formations and steep eroded cliffs in the Shawnee Hills of Illinois were formed by the sand deposits of an ancient inland sea. Since that time, windblown sand, rain and freeze and thaw action have eroded these exposed sedimentary layers, making the Camel Rock, Anvil Rock and Devil's Smokestack some of the most beautiful formations in the area. The drive is long, and the 4 mile trail is steep, but the outstanding views are well worth it! Ages 8 and up. Registration required.



RACERS Salamander Sleuths Saturday, March 27 9am-Noon

Get ready to find slippery, slimy salamanders! Salamanders are awesome amphibians that are out and about in the early spring. Natural history biologist, Bob Gillespie, will help us learn about these amazing creatures. Be prepared for a field outing to some local wetlands. **Racers** programs are designed for teens ages 12-17. Registration required.



COMING IN APRIL

17 Bashin' Trash Saturday, 8am-Noon

The nature center is partnering with the Cape Girardeau Parks & Recreation Department to clean up Cape LaCroix Creek during their annual Park Day. Gather your friends, family or organization to help bring the beauty back to the creek between Route W and Shawnee Sports Complex. We'll meet at Arena Park shelter #1 at 8:00 am to distribute trash bags and receive section assignments. Lunch and t-shirts will be provided. Wear your water shoes, work gloves and appropriate clothing to "bash trash". All ages. Youth and adult groups welcome. Registration required. Early registration begins March 2